



UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE
FOUNDATION OF CONNECTICUT
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Testimony in Support of SB 330

An act establishing a human right to equal enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health

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My name is Nancy Burton. I am a Certified Nurse-Midwife with over 40 years of clinical experience. I am also an educator currently on faculty at Yale, involved in educating the next generation of Certified Nurse-Midwives and Women's Health Nurse Practitioners.

I am the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Universal Health Care Foundation. At the Foundation, we believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable health care and promotes health in Connecticut.

As legislators, you are some of the most important and powerful members of our community, which gives you added responsibility to work towards solutions to fix our broken health care system.

I am testifying in favor of SB 330, "An act establishing a human right to equal enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health." The World Health Organization states that this "includes access to all medical services, sanitation, adequate food, decent housing, healthy working conditions, and a clean environment." All of these are very important. My expertise is in access to medical services so that is where I will concentrate my testimony. I have seen for myself the results of what happens when people cannot access care they can afford.

The language proposed in this bill once existed in our state statutes. However, it disappeared with the disbanding of the Commission on Health Equity. This might seem like a purely symbolic act but it lays the groundwork for future laws and actions by the state. It sets the bar that we commit to as a state. It gives us a yardstick against which we can measure our success.

This is about human stories with human consequences. I want to tell you a few stories to put a human face on what we are discussing.

I knew a man named Al. Al was a municipal bus driver. He developed insulin dependent diabetes. Because of this, he lost the license he needed for his work. He lost his job, he lost his health insurance. His doctor did what he could to help, giving him samples when he had them, reducing his own charges. But Al could not keep up. He gave up and stopped going for care. Al eventually made it back in to care, but by then he was in renal failure. Al died. A death that could have been prevented with good health care.

Wanda is a woman who came to see me for health care. Five years before I saw her she had hand surgery. She was uninsured and she and her family were still paying off these bills. Therefore, when she found a lump in her breast she didn't tell anyone. After what must have been some number of years, her daughter accidentally got a look at her breast and brought her in for care. By the time I saw her, her right breast had been totally eaten away by cancer and it was spreading to her left breast. It was the most appalling thing I have ever seen and I hope never to see it again. I referred Wanda on for care and do not know what the outcome was, but I have never forgotten her.

I have a family member with chronic illnesses that keep her in constant pain and may eventually leave her totally disabled and possibly lead to an early death. She is self-employed as a counselor. She was making a salary that put her just over the cut off to be eligible for a subsidy under the Affordable Care Act. Through the Exchange, she was going to have to pay \$900/month for a plan with a \$4000 out of pocket deductible. This was completely unaffordable for her. So, she went without insurance, until her health limited how much she could work and brought her income down to a level where she qualified for a subsidy.

We can do better than this. We must do better than this. Martin Luther King once said, "Of all the forms of injustice, inequality in health care is the most shocking of them all." We live in one of the richest states in one of the richest countries in the world. We can take care of our citizens. We just need the will to do so. Passing this bill, which commits us to quality health care for all, is a first step that we need to take.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice.